

Whenever I post on social media about the many RV ferry crossings my wife and I have experienced, I get comments like these:

“Wait! What? You can take a large RV on a ferry?!?! This adds a whole new level to my bucket list!”

“Wow! What a great post! Thanks for sharing as I know I’d be a total wreck worrying about all this. Now my worries will be much less when the time comes to board a ferry with my RV.”

“Thank you for all the great info. You’ve taken the mystery out of ferry crossings for many!”

*A Step-by-Step Guide for Adventurous RVers*

# RV FERRY TRAVEL MADE EASY

By **ERIK J. ANDERSON** #129446



Have you thought about taking your RV on a boat ride? No? Well, you should! Many RVers don't consider taking their RVs on a ferry because they don't think it's possible, are unsure if it is worth it or don't know how to do it easily and safely.

I enjoy helping my fellow RVers overcome the fears and uncertainty about ferrying their RVs. With this step-by-step guide to RV ferry travel, you can successfully incorporate fun ferry crossings into your otherwise land-based RV routes.

### **Benefits of Taking Your RV on a Ferry**

We're often asked, "Why do you take ferry routes with your RV?" That's easy: We love boat rides! Anytime we get to cruise across stretches of water, especially on nice sunny days, it's a treat! Ferry crossings can help avoid annoying traffic bottlenecks on routes near major cities. Putting your RV on a ferry often saves many miles of driving.

Despite higher fares for large vehicles like RVs, taking a ferry can sometimes save money in fuel and toll expenses.

Even if RV ferry travel isn't more economical, it breaks up travel days, providing drivers and passengers an opportunity to reduce travel-day stress and enjoy calming waterway scenery. That alone is valuable in our book!

### **Before You Go: Plan Your RV Ferry Travel**

Most GPS-based RV routes automatically avoid ferry crossings. So, we pull up Google Maps and look for possible ferry crossings that could make our route more direct and definitely more fun. In coastal regions, there are often ferries traversing large bays and sounds. Inland ferries may cross large lakes and sometimes rivers.

"If you fail to plan, you plan to fail." That saying rings true with RV ferry travel, too. A little planning goes a long way toward practical and fun ferry crossings with your RV. Here are some of our best tips for taking your RV on a ferry crossing.

### **Will Your RV Fit on a Ferry?**

Your first step is determining if a particular ferry can accommodate large vehicles, like trucks and big RVs. Most ferry company websites provide the necessary information on vehicle height, weight and length restrictions. Some smaller ferries can't handle large vehicles, while many others routinely carry full-length, tractor trailers. If you don't readily see information online about large vehicles, a quick call to the ferry company will confirm whether or not they can accommodate your rig.

### **Ferry Crossing Fares for RVs**

Next, look up fares for large vehicles. Typically, these fares are based on either the exact length of your rig by the foot, or fixed rates for ranges of lengths. The fares apply to motorhomes, motorhomes towing and truck-plus trailer/5th wheel combinations. For example, on one East Coast ferry, RV combinations 60' or less had a set fare of \$45 one-way. An additional fee may also apply for each passenger.

Keep in mind that fares for RV ferry crossings can vary greatly from one ferry to another, even for the same crossing distance. Two coastal ferries that we enjoy with our RV illustrate this. The ferry crossing on Delaware Bay from Lewes, Delaware, to Cape May, New Jersey, cost us \$85 one-way for our 54' overall length. The Cross Sound Ferry from Long Island, New York, to Connecticut is roughly the same distance and time, yet cost us \$285 one-way! That's a big difference, but still worth it to us because it eliminates nearly 200 miles of driving, including the nasty congestion of I-95 through the NYC/lower Connecticut region.

NOTE: Be accurate and honest about your total rig or rig combination length when making ferry reservations. We've had ferry staff pull out a long tape measure and check us from the front cap of our motorhome all the way back to the bikes hanging off the rack on our toad!

### **Reservations Are a Must**

Many RVers enjoy a serendipitous, care-free, no-reservation style of RV travel. We



know that can work great with many RV parks and campgrounds, however, for RV ferry travel...not so much! Ferries have a finite amount of vehicle space for each crossing. Our big, long RVs can take up several car lengths of that space. Additionally, some ferries can only handle large, tall vehicles in the middle lower deck lanes, not the sides or upper decks.

Ferry companies may require, or strongly encourage, reservations for large vehicles and RVs. Without reservations, while there are stand-by opportunities, you could easily be out of luck waiting several crossings or into the next day to finally secure a spot.

### **Watch The Tides.**

#### **“Really? What About Tides?”**

Now there’s a concept most RVers never think about when planning their routes! However, when planning a coastal RV ferry crossing, tides can indeed be a factor.

In coastal areas with wide tidal ranges, the angle of the dock ramp to the ferry can be quite steep at peak high and low tides. Trucks and RV’s with lower ground clearance (think leveling/stabilizer jacks and hitches) run a risk of grounding when boarding or disembarking.

As a general rule-of-thumb, ferry companies often recommend reserving times at least two hours before or after the high and low tide marks. Some ferry company websites even provide tide charts to help you choose the best reservation times.

### **Arrival and Boarding**

Most ferry lines advise arriving no less than a half-hour before your departure time. We make sure we’re checked in and in line at least one hour prior. We’re all about minimizing our travel-day stress and not rushing. That’s the nice thing about having an RV—you have your own personal comforts-of-home to enjoy while you wait!

For some ferry crossings, we’ll reserve a nearby RV park site for the night prior to departure. That makes things super relaxed. In the morning we don’t have to worry. We can have a leisurely breakfast and make a short drive over to the ferry terminal with plenty of time to spare.

Have your reservation paperwork and ID ready as you approach check-in. And,

again, don’t be surprised if staff measure your entire rig set up to ensure it matches the length you claimed on the reservation. You will also be asked that your propane is turned off at the tank.

About 15 minutes before departure, ferry staff will direct you to proceed to the boarding ramp. As you slowly drive onto the ferry, crewmembers will direct you exactly where they want you to go. All of the crew we’ve experienced have been professional and competent at guiding us. Follow their hand signals precisely.

### **Onboard the Ferry:**

#### **The Crossing Experience**

When the crewmember tells you to stop, set your brakes and shut off your engine. On most ferries we’ve been on, you are permitted to leave the vehicle while in transit. We have also been allowed to take Hershey Pup, our famous RV-travel dog, throughout the ferries with the exception of food service and some lounge areas. You’ll want to check the ferry company pet policy to be sure.

Once you’ve secured your rig, make the most of your ferry crossing time:

Walk around stretching your legs while you explore the ferry decks.

Most ferries have a food concession. Grab a snack, lunch or beverage in the ferry lounge area.

If you are a remote worker, like me and Jeanne, the ferry ride is a great time to get a little work done during the travel day. Don’t forget your own WiFi hotspot device.

If you can see the top of your RV from an upper ferry deck, it can be an opportunity to visually inspect your roof.

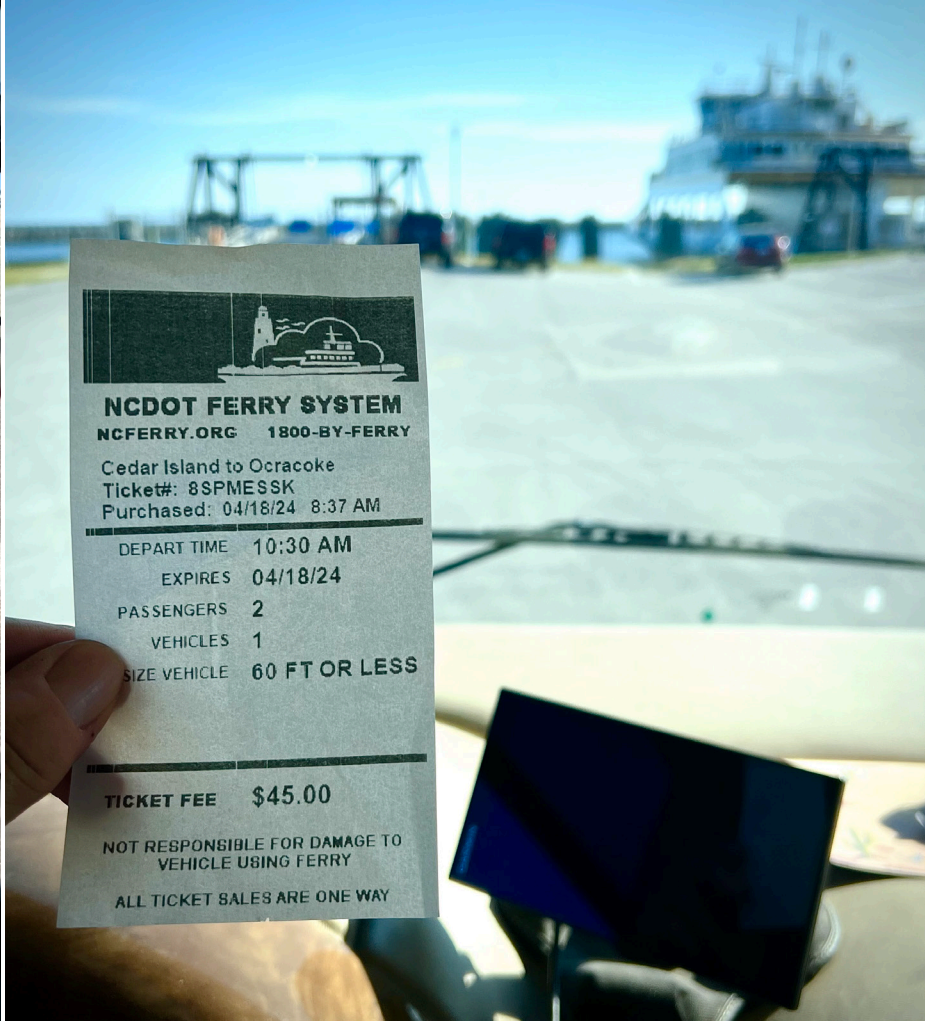
And my best advice if it’s a nice day: Relax topside, enjoying the water views and soaking up the sunshine!

### **Disembarking in Your RV: A Smooth Exit**

Prior to docking, you’ll hear an announcement asking you to return to your RV. There is usually plenty of time, so no need to rush.

Get everyone, including your furry companions, situated inside your RV. As the ferry approaches the dock and crewmembers begin securing the ramp, start your rig and be ready for instructions. Like you did when boarding, you’ll follow the ferry crewmembers’ hand signal directions exactly.





## Rolling Your RV Down the Ferry Ramp

Take it nice and slow, watching your side clearances, and lining yourself up for a straight run down the ramp. If you're on a coastal ferry and chose your reservation times according to the tides, the ramp angle should be fairly shallow. You shouldn't have any worries about grounding out, but proceed slowly anyway.

When your RV is off the ferry ramp and back on solid ground, simply follow the markings and signs to the ferry terminal exit. Once back on the highway, you're on your way to continuing your land-based route! Just be cognizant of any new local highway characteristics and speed limits, as well as possible new rules-of-the-road if you've disembarked in a new state or province.

## RV Ferry Travel Success

I hope these tips for RV ferry travel eases your mind and gets you excited to try your own ferry crossing with your RV. Remember these key points:

- Plan well ahead and make reservations.

- Research RV/large vehicle fares and any extra fees.
- Speak with ferry company customer service reps to understand their requirements, restrictions and RV boarding process.
- Arrive early or the night before.
- Follow the ferry crew members' directions exactly.
- Take your time; board and disembark slowly.
- Enjoy a relaxing crossing providing a nice respite from RV travel day driving!

## It's Time to Take Your RV on a Ferry Ride!

Rest assured, taking your RV on a ferry gets easier each time you do it. After a couple fun RV ferry crossings, you'll want to incorporate more into your RV adventures! 🚐

**ERIK J. ANDERSON** and his wife Jeanne have worked remotely and traveled full-time since 2020.

They love adventuring with their beloved dog, "Hershey Pup." Along with co-authoring the "Hershey Pup RV Adventures" childrens' book series, Erik enjoys contributing his writings to RV-related magazines, blogs and social media groups. his: "<https://hersheypupadventures.com/eriks-media-writing>

